

Message Text

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ACTION SSM-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 OC-06 CCO-00 PM-04 NSC-05
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2751

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG
SUBJECT: KONTOS DISCUSSION WITH PERES AND AVINERI

SUMMARY: IN SEPARATE MEETINGS, KONTOS RAISED WITH
DEFENSE MINISTER PERES AND MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL AVINERI
(A) QUESTION OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS AT SFM, AND
(B) POSSIBILITY OF SFM-TYPE OPERATIONS IN FUTURE. BOTH
PERES AND AVINERI FORESAW THAT INTRODUCING THIRD COUNTRY
NATIONALS INTO SFM WOULD LEAD TO PROBLEMS, AND
CAUTIONED AGAINST IT. PERES SEEMED MORE OPEN THAN
AVINERI TO CONSIDERING SFM-TYPE ARRANGEMENTS IN CONNECTIONS
WITH FUTURE AGREEMENTS, ALTHOUGH THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM
MAY BE MORE OF NUANCE THAN SUBSTANCE. PERES AND AVINERI WERE AGREED
THAT SFM HAS BEEN A CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS.
END SUMMARY.

1. SSM DIRECTOR KONTOS SAW BOTH PERES AND AVINERI ON
APRIL 18. IN BOTH CALLS HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE',
THORNE AND ROBERTS.
2. IN MEETING WITH PERES, KONTOS BEGAN BY STATING
THERE WAS A CONGRESSIONAL REQUIREMENT THAT CONSIDERATION
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BE GIVEN TO REDUCING THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN
PERSONNEL IN THE SFM AND REPLACING THEM WITH THIRD
COUNTRY NATIONALS, PERHAPS IN LOWER GRADED JOBS.
WOULD A MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION GIVE THE ISRAELIS PROBLEMS?

3. PERES SAID THAT IN HIS JUDGMENT THE SFM WAS SPECIAL.
WHY CHANGE SOMETHING WHICH IS WORKING AS WELL AS THE

SFM? IT IS VALUABLE NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS PHYSICAL PRESENCE BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE EGYPTIANS BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CALLED ITS "PSYCHOLOGICAL ECHO." ANY CHANGE IN THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS WOULD PROBABLY CAUSE MORE TROUBLE THAN IT WOULD BE WORTH. IN FACT, HE SAID, HE REGARDED THE SFM AS WORTH MORE TO ISRAEL THAN A BATTALION OF SOLDIERS. TO TINKER WITH THE PRESENT SET-UP WOULD CREATE DOUBTS AND SUSPICION AND MIGHT UPSET SOMETHING WHICH HAS BEEN A REAL ACHIEVEMENT.

4. FURTHERMORE, PERES ADDED, EGYPT AND ISRAEL WOULD PROBABLY NEVER AGREE ON WHAT THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED. THERE WOULD BE SUSPICIONS ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER THAT A THRID COUNTRY NATIONAL WOULD BE REPORTING INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION TO HIS GOVERNMENT. IT WAS SIMPLY NOT WORTHWHILE TAKING THE TROUBLE.

5. KONTOS THEN INQUIRED WHAT THE MINISTER THOUGHT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE SFM IN CONNECTION WITH FUTURE MIDDLE EAST AGREEMENTS. PERES' FIRST COMMENT ON THIS ISSUE WAS THAT BOTH EGYPT AND ISRAEL HAVE "COMPLETE TRUST" IN THE U.S. HE COULD SEE NO POSITIVE WORK WHICH COULD BE DONE BY OTHERS IN THE PEACE-KEEPING AREA, ALTHOUGH THE SCANDINAVIANS HAD BEEN HELPFUL IN THE UN FORCES. TO INTRODUCE THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS WOULD REQUIRE A SERIES OF AGREEMENTS BY ISRAEL WITH EACH COUNTRY CONCERNED. ISRAEL IS COMPLETELY SATISFIED
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WITH THE SFM AS IT IS NOW OPERATING: IT IS ONE OF THE BETTER EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND HAS PLAYED A POSITIVE ROLE IN PEACE-KEEPING EFFORTS.

6. COMING TO THE QUESTIONOF SIMILAR TYPE ARRANGEMENTS, PERES SAID YES, HE COULD SEE WHERE THERE WOULD BE A ROLE FOR THEM. HOWEVER, FIRST ISRAEL HAD TO GET THROUGH ITS ELECTIONS, THEN A GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE FORMED, AND THEN ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO COME TO THE U.S.WITH PROPOSALS IN REGARD TO PEACE. AS HE HAD TOLD SECRETARY VANCE,THERE WAS A ROLE FOR WATCH STATIONS.BOTH SIDES FEAR SURPRISE ATTACK. THE PROBLEM WAS, THEREFORE, TO CREATE A MACHINERY SO THAT NEITHER PARTY WOULD BE GREATLY WORRIED ABOUT SUCH AN ATTACK. OF COURSE, WATCH STATIONS WERE NOT FOOLPROOF BUT FOR A COUNTRY TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK, IN SPITE OF A WATCH STATION, WOULD BE TO BREACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. AND WOULD ONLY BE DONE FOR THE MOST SERIOUS REASONS.

7. MUCH OF THE SAME GROUND WAS COVERED IN THE DISCUSSION WITH AVINERI. AVINERI SAID THAT TO ATTEMPT TO BRING THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS INTO SFM WOULD INTRODUCE A COMPLETELY NEW ELEMENT. LIKE PERES, HE THOUGHT THAT SFM HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN A U.S. OPERATION AND BECAUSE THE U.S. HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH THE ISRAELIS AND THE EGYPTIANS. IT HAD, THEREFORE, AVOIDED SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH ARISE FROM BRINGING IN MIXED UNITS. BECAUSE SFM HAS WORKED WELL HE WOULD HESITATE TO SEE ANY CHANGE.

8. IN REGARD TO OTHER SFMS, AVINERI FELT THAT WOULD DEPEND ON THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS. HE HAD A HUNCH THAT SFM HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE IT HAD NOT BEEN PLANNED AND, THEREFORE, HAD NOT RUN INTO CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS. IF THE EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS HAD BEEN TOLD CONFIDENTIAL

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AHEAD OF TIME THAT A SFM WOULD HAVE TO BE SET UP IN CONNECTION WITH SINAI II, THEY PROBABLY NEVER COULD HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT. KONTOS SAID THAT HE CONCLUDED FROM AVINERI'S OBSERVATIONS THAT "IMPROVISATION FOLLOWS POLITICAL AGREEMENT," A POINT WITH WHICH AVINERI CONCURRED.
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